

Meditation or Self-Hypnosis?

Dionysios Farasiotis



.... Thus, the contrast between meditation and Christian prayer shows our great difference. As much as they want to present themselves as similar and similar and superior, there is a "great gap" between us. As much as light differs from darkness, God from Satan, so does Christ and His Church differ from the Gurus and their New Age organizations.

What is meditation?... How does a person's mind work during meditation? ... How does the psyche and thinking of people who practice it regularly and for a long time change? ... How is it used by modern gurus and their New Age organizations?... What role does it play in their plans? ... Does it have anything to do with Christian prayer? ...

We will try to find the answers to these questions with the help of a "critical spirit" through the gurus' teachings and primarily through their actions, which speak louder than their words.

When we say "critical spirit," we mean that we do not reject the other without justification, driven by an emotional prejudice or misinformation, but neither do we accept easily and unquestioningly any of his views (on man, the world, God) without first "sifting" them. A critical spirit means - listening carefully, understanding correctly, having comprehensive information from other religions, philosophies and ideologies on the same subject, comparing it with the scientific knowledge of our time, and finally, thinking based on common sense.

It is a fact that our age is hostile to critical thinking, so few take the trouble. Advertising, marketing, the media, and the yellow press want us to swallow without thinking about what they serve us so that they can exploit us without resistance. Today, they want to create a type of human-robot that will only produce and consume - a component of an economic machine. One who will identify his existence with his work, whose life will be all about material things. Without Christ. Without thought, without personal will. A 100% controlled follower.

Below, I will mention three actual incidents in which I took part. They come from three different organizations that are networked in almost all countries of the Western world. The image, the face, of each organization is different.

The first organization, Mind Control, has a scientific, modern, Western facade, with which it presents itself to the modern market of metaphysical concerns to attract followers.

The second organization of Guru Sri Chinmoy has adapted Hinduism to the desires of the modern Western youth, so it promotes meditation combined with music, womanizing, sports, and painting. The centre of the organization and the guru's primary residence is New York.

The third organization is that of Guru Satyananda, with its headquarters in Montgir, India. Although it sells simplified Hinduism and yoga for easy access to the Western market of metaphysical pursuits, this organization keeps its Hindu identity more strongly. It seems more exotic, more pure Indian than the others. Lately, it has been marketed as a 'Yoga University' for easier access to the Western market of followers.

All three are small parts of the global New Age movement, which seeks to change the Christian character of Western societies and impose Eastern beliefs about man, the world and God. The New Age is preparing the ground for the emergence of a new world religious leader who will establish the only world religion, abolish the current religions and eventually declare himself God and claim absolute power for himself. It is he whom the Gospel calls the Antichrist. Many Christian Saints, the Apostle Paul, the Apostle and Evangelist John the Theologian, and Jesus Christ himself have prophesied his appearance, temporary rule and destruction.

First Example

Let's start the presentation of the facts with "Mind Control" (or the Silva Method).

The seminars were held in a rented room in a large, central and expensive hotel in the city and cost half a student's monthly salary. The method is presented as the personal invention of a poor Mexican electrical engineer, José Silva, who is alive today and has become rich thanks to it.

In my private conversations with our teachers, I learned that one of them had been practicing Kriya Yoga for many years, had been a disciple of the guru, and had "worked" in this organization for a living. Our other teacher thought that yoga was not suited to Western man and was following a strange occult path. She also worked in the

organization to make money. Her personal teacher was in Paris and was a European magician.

Anyone who has studied the religious philosophies and practices of the East (Hinduism, Buddhism, Zen, Taoism, occultism, Spiritualism, etc.) quickly understands that it is a variation and that only the name and the marketing are different ... Or the substance remains the same—the same old techniques of the East, the self-suppression. The newcomers, who have not dealt with these things in the past, cannot recognize the old Oriental techniques, which are camouflaged behind the modern 'scientific' terminology, which is even presented as a new discovery. If they stay in the field and work on other branches of it, they will be surprised to 'discover' the common roots at some point in the future.



What they led us to do.

We are sitting comfortably in the chairs of the hotel's conference centre. There are about seventy of us. The short introductory theory is over ... We relax ... We close our eyes. We

will keep them closed until the practice is over ... We shout loud and long, all together, the sacred Hindu syllable, the OM the room vibrates for about two minutes with the sound of OM "to spiritually cleanse the atmosphere" as we have been told before... This is, of course, not science. It is a Hindu religious belief. Nobody told us then, but none of us "newbies" noticed it either. We just did what we were told without thinking.

Immediately after the OM, with our eyes always closed, the teacher tells us: "I will count slowly and clearly, backwards, from ten to one. At each number, imagine that you are going one step deeper ... as if you were going down a ladder ... deeper, deeper and deeper ... ten ... nine ... seven six ... you are going down the ladder deeper, deeper and deeper ... five four ... now you are on a deeper level of mind. You will go down even deeper ... three ... two ... you are going down deeper and deeper," continues the teacher's suggestive voice. We listen to the instructions and feel ourselves descending "deeper and deeper, down this imaginary ladder. Anyway, we reached one. We are indeed half asleep ... the body and eyelids are heavy, and the mind is distorted, as if asleep, but with a certain consciousness ... we are indeed "submerged." ...or would it be more accurate to say "hypnotized" ...

"Now you are at a deep, energetic level of the mind," the teacher continues, "I want you to see clearly in your mind, in colour, the images I am going to tell you ... a red rose ... a sunset ... a lake ... a river ... an icy mountain ... a star ... etc."

The orders are given slowly. A series of directional images pass through my mind—something like television. Depending on how well-developed each person's imagination is, he sees the images clearly or more clearly... But this is indeed how we all cultivate and develop our imagination. Then he asks us "to imagine and create our spiritual workshop, where we will go each time we perform the technique."

One imagines a cave, another a villa on top of a mountain, another a huge apartment on top of a skyscraper, etc as we discussed later in the break.

He asks us "to imagine it in its smallest details." We do so ... he leaves us plenty of time ... our imagination runs wild.

After that, he asks us to "see" in our minds something that we would like to remember. ... He gives us the time ... Some "see" themselves as beautiful, some "see" their boss giving

them a raise, some "see" themselves as rich ... everyone's personal desires come out ... we dream with our eyes closed ...

Question: How do these scenes we imagine in our minds differ from real dreams? ...

Answer: These are dreams at will, programmed.

After giving us some time, the teacher said, "Now I'm going to count from one to ten. At each number, you will move up one step.

When I reach ten, you will wake up; you will be calm, perfectly healthy, rested and in a good mood. When I reach ten, you will all open your eyes.

It starts counting slowly. He gets to ten, and I open my eyes. My body is heavy. I look around and see people moving slowly, like someone waking up from sleep at that moment. My head is heavy and slow. If I had a bed, I'd like to sleep.

The teacher begins to speak. He assures us that if we work systematically on a topic every day, in the end, what we want will happen.

- Well, how will that happen? someone asks.

- When you practice the technique, you connect with the Universal Lord who rules the world, and he will make your wish come true; comes the answer ...

“The more you practice the method, the faster you will sink into it, the more you will get used to ... doing it at regular times, morning, noon, evening, even for ten minutes. Some people are in the alpha level (= the deepest level of the mind) all day long,” he says.

We said more. There have been other incidents where you can draw many conclusions if you analyze them. But I will concentrate my attention on three issues:

α) This practice works with the imagination. We were constantly invited to imagine different things. We were asked to imagine going down the steps of a staircase, to imagine different images, a river, a lake, a star, etc. and later imagine whole scenes, e.g. imagining our 'spiritual workshop' as the door, walls, windows, floor, bed, etc., and even 'in every detail.'

Then, imagine again dynamic scenes with movement.

Let us 'see' ourselves living like a rich man, imagine our boss giving us a raise ... So we became little directors and saw our plays played out in our minds with the power of imagination.

So, the individual's imagination is needed and cultivated by this method. Indeed, suppose one thinks of a person who has been practising this method daily and for years. In that case, one can easily understand how much he has developed the power of his imagination on the one hand, but also how much of his life will be in the realm of imagination or at least under its influence on the other.

b) This technique reinforces submission and passivity.

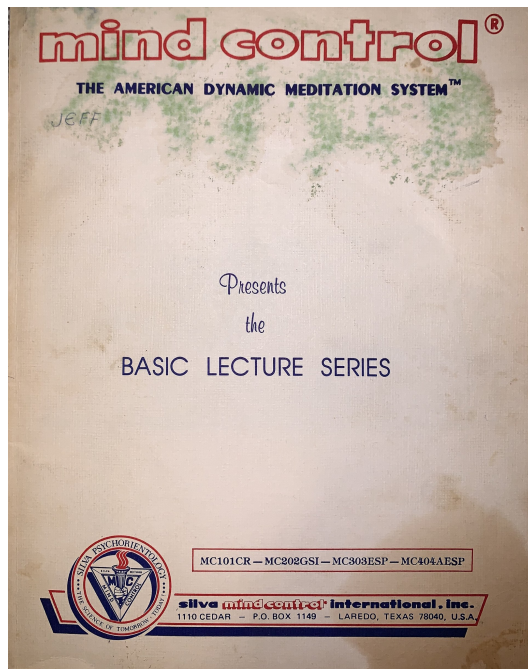
Let us now focus on how the Mind Control method was performed. We sit comfortably in a chair and relax, close our eyes and lose contact with our surroundings, let out for a few minutes that long "sacred" sound, the OM, and our thoughts are stopped or reduced immediately afterwards by an evocative voice of a yogi, who has been practising these techniques for years, tells us what to do. We obey continuously; the commands come one after the other. We obey automatically, mechanically, without thinking because there is no time to think; if you want to think, you must stop the practice.

We keep obeying like unwilling beings. Our will has been subordinated to his. We have surrendered our minds into his hands to be treated as he wills. We have entered into this submission process without being informed of what would happen from the beginning. We were not given the opportunity and the time to think, realize, judge, and choose freely. We were brought before a fait accompli. We were hated. We have been in this situation for about twenty minutes. When he tells us to 'wake up,' we 'wake up' and feel our heads heavy as if coming out of a sleep.

What is all this? Is it group hypnosis? ... Because they changed the noun to "submerged" instead of "hypnotized," wasn't the act the same? ... Clearly, it's the same thing! ... It was group hypnosis by the experienced yogi to "break" the resistance of the mind, so that we could proceed to self-hypnosis. Because the seminar actually teaches self-hypnosis.

They then gave us a tape to practice the technique at home. The instructions were: Stay alone in a quiet room in your home and say that you are not to be disturbed, close the shutters and lights so that it is dark and quiet, sit in the lotus position or some other meditation posture or if you cannot, lie on your back on the floor relax and put the tape on and play the tape.

When the tape starts to play, there is a continuous buzzing sound for a few minutes, as if a machine is running intermittently. This buzz is apparently "preparing" the mind (like the long sacred OM sound) to carry out the commands that follow "without thought" and internal reactions. This constant buzzing "empties" the mind of thoughts, leaving no room for thoughts to arise. At least it limits their quantity.



In general, this is the technique of self-hypnosis through tape. In our meetings, there was talk of dependence on the voice of the teacher or the voice of the tape. Some people practised the technique more easily and deeply when they received the commands from the voice they were used to.

Have you heard of the hypnotist's (medium's) dependence on his hypnotist? Which even deepens as the number of hypnotic encounters increases.

From the end of the last century until the middle of the twentieth century, the type of Indian fakir or Oriental hypnotist with a turban, who toured towns and cities and performed in cinemas and theatres, was well known.

I have been told of mass hypnotism by people who have experienced it themselves. One of them recounted that some students could not untie their hands at the behest of the 'hypnotist in a pedagogical academy.'

Similar phenomena occurred in barracks. They created a sensation in those years, and serious scientists set up 'companies' to study the phenomena.

Thus, the ground was prepared ... why didn't we get to the current situation suddenly... Nowadays, they are also trying to take over the universities because that is how they will gain prestige in Western societies and impose themselves ... scientists have been 'screwed' so many times ... if you read the history of science, you will find a whole series of false theories that were accepted by the scientific community and for some periods of time were the undisputed 'scientific truth' of their time ... why not fall for it today? ... can scientific instruments detect the demonic energy behind hypnotism? ...

We are dealing here with a spiritual phenomenon, with the Devil, and need spiritual knowledge, holiness ... Christ.

Let us hope that God will not allow the Devil to ensnare scientists.

After the tape and after we had gotten used to and assimilated the technique, we could apply it ourselves, without a teacher, without a tape. We could "self-submerge".

They prefer the term "self-submergence" to "self-hypnosis" because the term "hypnosis" causes fear and hesitation in people and because it is a term that has a history and, therefore, cannot be presented as a new discovery. For the same reasons, this particular organization, with its scientific, modern, western facade, avoids the term 'meditation' at least at first.

But ... no matter how many new terms they invent, the content will always remain the same—the same common practice of hypnosis with the dominant energy of the mind being the energy of imagination.

c) Their grand promises are the vehicle by which they ultimately keep people under their power.

They apply all the modern rules of marketing and advertising.

The first promise stems from the organization's name: we will learn to control our minds and use their hidden powers. The promise culminates when the teacher tells us "that the Universal Mind that rules the world will carry out your quest." ... that is, whatever imaginary image we want to project into the "screen of our minds" through whatever technique we have been taught will be realized for us by the Universal Mind ... that is to say, they promise us no more or less that we can become rich, beautiful, healthy, get

promoted, gain social status, power or even 'spiritual progress,' 'spiritual knowledge' or even 'holiness.'

After all, the founder of the movement, José Silva, who went from being a poor Mexican peasant to a wealthy man with great social action and influence in many world countries through the organization he founded, is held up as an example.

We are then invited to sign up for the seminar's association of respondents. In this way, we would be in contact with each other and be informed of new 'discoveries.'

At the same time, we become members of a group of people who support each other socially, make new friends and acquaintances, and acquire new possibilities ... On the other hand, of course, the 'leaders' of the group increase their social influence; they can more easily pass on the messages and unilateral information they want, and they can more easily shape the minds and worldviews of their followers.

Let's look at these big promises, which we all take as bait and finally get caught on the hook of the organization.

First of all. Who is this "universal mind" that will make my wishes come true? ... Does he exist? ... And if he exists, what does he ask in return for fulfilling my wish? ... Is it the submission of my mind? ... Is it a power game? ...

If by the term "universal mind," God is implied, then we are dealing with a religion that brings its followers into contact with God. The whole facade of the "scientific" method is shattered ... So we have an attempt to deceive ... If it is not God but some other 'spirit,' then what kind of spirit is it? Jesus has told us that there are two kinds of spiritual powers: God and the angels or the devil and his demons. There is nothing else ... and since this "Universal Mind" is not Christ and is manipulating, undermining and distorting the teachings and the Church of Christ, then it is obvious who is behind this mask.

Of course, the Neo-Pagans call the "Universal Mind" a conference of wise "supermen" who will be the world government when the Antichrist appears, who will have the energy and power of Satan, as the Gospel says.

Do not expect them to reveal their secrets to you. These are for the "advanced". The others are merely being warned.

Fortunately, God does not allow Satan to hide himself whole, for then he would deceive all men. Thus, by the grace of Christ, various high-ranking officials of the New Age have changed sides and revealed "from within" their evil and wicked plans.

Does the method finally fulfil the promises lavishly distributed by the organization? It is not a hypothesis, but life experience itself provides the answer. My acquaintances are on the same social level. They have not managed to get rich by applying the method, as if by magic. Some of them have separated and broken up their families, i.e. the method has not helped them to improve their relationships and, thus, their quality of life. As for the healing 'miraculous' powers of the method ... and here too I have my objections... because 'my teacher,' Paul Grivas, died of cancer despite all the appeals of the whole group for his sake. So here, too, we have at least relevance. I know of no one personally who was cured by the method. They just claim...

So, for most of the followers of the method, neither their financial situation nor their health has changed, nor have they become superhuman super-mutes. What has changed is their perception of man, the world, and God, and consequently, their personality and behaviour have changed.

Their character also changed. They became more passive, dependent on the Mind Control group, and directed by it. Mind control did happen. Only they didn't control their own minds, but the group's leaders did. They themselves became directed followers. They are working on expanding the team, promoting it socially, and running some carefully planned programmes with all the marketing rules, which some people in America have decided and planned without their involvement.

They have thus unwisely joined the lower echelons of a hierarchical structure and have become the masters, leaders and gurus who control their thinking and their personal lives.

Of course, I know several who have given up and returned to their previous life.

Others "progress" within the organization and develop into executives. But they also have a particular character structure that would allow them to climb the ladder to a political party, for example.

It is a personal belief, derived from experience that sometimes, in some individuals, usually the "advanced" leaders of the group, non-human forces are indeed at work. They are spiritual forces that support and direct the organization. Humans have contact with spiritual beings, i.e. demons ... They use them... So they are witches.

Second Example



Seminar organized by the "OM Centre" of Guru Sri Chinmoy. It is taught by a disciple of the guru. The poster inviting us to the lecture was titled "How to Achieve Your Spiritual Goals with the Help of Yoga." It went something like this.

How they teach meditation:

After having secured some external conditions, a quiet place where we will not be interrupted, and after sitting relaxed, in a comfortable position (lying on the floor or leaning on a chair or in the "lotus position" for the advanced ones), we close our eyes and concentrate our mind on a specific point, e.g. on the part of the heart. The teacher suggested, "Imagine that you are inhaling and exhaling not through the nostrils but through the part of the heart. Feel the air passing through your heart". So we closed our eyes, and for about ten minutes, we meditated ... that is, we imagined that the air was coming in and out of the heart. According to the teaching, this was supposed to "open" the spiritual heart, and we would get love. Then, there was a pause for the teacher to talk about yoga, metempsychosis, karma, and his guru. The first exercise was followed shortly by a second one.

So after we relaxed, closed our eyes, and concentrated again on the part of the heart, the teacher ordered us to imagine a beautiful flower in that part of the heart. He told us to identify with it. After allowing a few minutes for us to complete our imagination and experience it more intensely, he instructed us to immerse ourselves in the heart of the flower where there was, he said, a miniature sun. "Sink into the sun ... Feel the sun grow and become one with you... ". This exercise lasted several minutes. We realize these fantastic images in our minds depending on our imagination's development.

The return to the real world slowly begins after this immersion of the mind in imaginary images. "Feel that you are coming out of the sun ... you are back in the flower, step out over the flower ... listen to the sounds around you ... open your eyes slowly."

We could hear the teacher's voice guiding us. Again, this process is done slowly so that the meditator has time to imagine what the teacher is saying.

After the exercise, we continued with a conversation. "These exercises are very simple but very powerful. Especially if you practice them daily at set times... In this way, you will be able to realize spiritual reality and rise to a higher spiritual level," says the teacher.

When the lecture was over, the yogi master allowed three questions to be asked. The following dialogue followed:

- On the one hand, you tell us about some "spiritual reality" that meditation will help us discover; on the other hand, you have made us imagine this reality in all our exercises. How do we know that this reality exists? How do we know that it is not a figment of our imagination?

- Meditation will convince you of that. The more you practice, the more you will become certain and experience this reality.

- But ... if every day I do what you said, that is, I get up every morning and meditate on the spiritual heart, that is, I imagine that I am "breathing" through the spiritual heart, that I am exchanging energy with the universe, and I want to underline the word imagine, am I not self-deceiving? After years of repetition, will I not eventually come to believe and take my imagination for reality?

Am I imprisoning myself in an imaginary world that does not exist? More than that, am I reaching a state of confusing the real with the imaginary? I mean, there is neither a flower nor a sun in the heart, is there? ...

- Yes, there is no flower and sun; it is just that you, through the practice of meditation, embody and appropriate the qualities of these images, that is, the beauty of the flower and the brightness of the sun, and thus help to realize them in your life.

- That is to say, it is a self-indulgence. A self-programming or programming from outside, since you choose these symbols and we simply carry out your instructions ... Ultimately, the one who chooses the symbols is the one who programs the minds of others who simply ... execute.

- Look... Our whole society is programming us; we are changing this program with another better, more positive one.

- I agree that society "programs" people's minds from the moment they are born, and often with negative values, such as selfishness, aggression, competition, and the pursuit of power, money, and pleasure by any means ... just look at the television programmes today ... these values are constantly being promoted ... sex, violence, drugs too ... I agree with this ... But how do we know that the new programme you are proposing is the right one?

- Do you know the truth?

- I have many doubts about your proposal and want to discuss them. What assures me that the programme you want to put into our minds is valid? What if it is wrong? ... Am I going to spend the rest of my life believing wrong to be right? Isn't that dangerous? The least I'll get is a wasted, wasted life... And since this is years and years of ever-deepening self-indulgence, will I ever find the spiritual strength to shake off this program? Will I even be able to think that the fault is in the programme? ... So it is as if we are murdering the critical faculty of the mind.

After the last question, the atmosphere between us became cold, and he showed that he was not in the mood for further discussion.

I have also participated in some hypnotic meetings and heard Indian yogis talk about hypnosis and meditation. I have seen people hypnotized with my own eyes; I have seen Guru Babaji hypnotize people in a matter of seconds, which I have done five or six times in India. In a movement magazine, I read Guru Satyananda's statement that he once hypnotized a child. I have read some books about these things. Because of all of the above, I maintain that meditation is self-hypnosis. This is my own experience, and this was the view of the "advanced disciples" of the various gurus I met in India.

Besides, the gurus themselves admit it (under certain conditions). In other words, they teach the world a process through which one can be self-hypnotized while having some control over one's mind and directing it. There are several ways of meditation (self-hypnotism), each with advantages and disadvantages.

When one practices systematically and for a period of time in some chosen way, one happens to self-hypnotize quickly and deeply.

When he finds himself in this state of consciousness, he brings into his mind the image of a symbol, some Hindu mandala, the face of the guru or some "god" or something else to which he wants to resemble.

Of course, all those who meditate are usually guided by a guru, so the topics are technically specific and pre-selected by the "spiritual" leaders. Thus, they are usually directed to "remember" their previous lives to instill the belief in transmigration. They are directed to meditate on the face of the guru to embrace the spiritual values he supposedly embodies. Still, in reality, through some such side tricks, they will be led to admire him, to deify him, to obey him readily without objection and finally to become his mouthpieces and instruments.

Their cunning is deep. By meditation, that is, by self-hypnosis and self-submission, to put it bluntly, the person is led to forge his own spiritual chains, with which they will bind him to the vehicle of their delusion and make him essentially their slave. They use the very mental power of man, the very mind of man, to subdue him. It's like being persuaded to gouge your own eyes with your hands.

“While evil men and imposters go from bad to worse, deceiving and being deceived” (2 Tim. 3:13) says the apostle Paul. That is, "... impostors will go to the worst and will deceive others, and they themselves will be deceived", and indeed the gurus, those who want to be considered "spiritual leaders," "reached teachers," "uncle teachers," "gods," have erred much worse than those who err.

The height of delusion, arrogance and pride is to think you are a god when you are only a perishable man, a creation of the true God.

This is how gurus reach their own deification. Using meditation, i.e. self-submission through self-hypnosis, they choose God as the object of their meditation. They try to identify and become one with Him, imagining they are gods.

Practicing daily for years and years with the very above techniques (spontaneous submission), they eventually reach the point of taking their imagination for reality, eliminating any trace of doubt that logical thinking would give rise to.

They identify so completely with their imagination that they finally believe they are "gods." Almost all gurus have declared themselves "gods" (Sai Baba, Maharaji, Babaji, Krishnamurti, Moon, etc.). Then, they continue to live and behave as ... gods, accepting the worship of their followers, who have led them astray.

Their whole life is spent in a fantasy. Far from reality, far from the truth, immersed in a lie. All their lives, they pretend to be "god." ... What can one say? ... Of course, there are some children who, as soon as they are born, declare them "gods" and treat them and educate them with this delusion. For example, Guru Maharaji, whose father, a guru himself, instilled this faith in him with soft fingernails. The same is true with the Dalai Lamas, who have been recognized as incarnated Buddhas since childhood.

It is difficult for a child who hears these things from his father's or mother's mouth to escape later. From a young age, he was imprisoned in a lie, but he got used to it; he believed it as truth, and thus he doesn't even search or wonder about the truth... It's terrible!!!

We should feel sorry for them... The same fallacy binds perpetrators and victims. Who misled them all? ... The gurus and their followers? ... Who led them so far from reality? ... Did they alone dive so deeply into the lie? ...

First, there is behind them a false "spiritual tradition" of thousands of years. They are born and bred in it. Christianity never took root in large sections of the Indian population. Ancient paganism holds up well to this day.

This tradition contributes the most to making a person go astray and believe that he and others around him are "god."

But the question arises. Why is this tradition preserved to this day? Who maintains it? Wouldn't they have been extinguished long ago if they were just empty words? ...

It is accurate, and it is a reality that there are some "spiritual" events, some "spiritual" experiences, some "lights," and some "voices" that make people believe in this tradition. I don't want to give more details. I only want to say that the Gospel of Christ indicates to us the inventor, the creator and the maintainer of the fallacy. He is "the dragon, the great ancient serpent, the one called the Devil and Satan, the deceiver of the whole world" (Revelation ch. 12, verse 9).

Third Example



It is the movement of Guru Satyananda. I present here more briefly two lectures-courses—the first lesson. Sivamurti herself does it. The leader of the movement in Greece. It comes from Australia. Some of my acquaintances considered her a guru.

We are around twenty people. We were all under the age of twenty-five. He first makes us do some physical exercises (asanas) so that when he tells us to sit cross-legged and relax, our body does it ... pleasantly.

- Close your eyes, he says, and we obey.
- Become aware of the spiritual space in front of your face, he says again.

Darkness spreads before me. I try to feel it, to find its limits.

- Imagine a candle burning in this space.
- We're trying.
- Open your eyes and stare intently and steadily at the candle flame burning before you.

Someone in the meantime has indeed lit a large candle. After we stare at it intensely and steadily for a few minutes without anyone speaking, he orders us again.

- Close your eyes, and hold the image of the candle before your eyes.

Now, things are tangible. There is the transition. When we look directly at the sun, then for a while, wherever we turn our eyes, even if we close them, we "see" the sun due to the intense stimulation of the optic nerve, which maintains the original image. This kind of metamorphosis is also created with the candle. Thus, the image of the candle is before us. One does not need to have a developed imagination to see the candle.

- Try to keep the image steady and clear in front of you with your eyes closed, he says again.

I'm actually making it.

- Now try to see a beautiful red rose ...

Look at the whole thing ... with the drops of dew on it ... Here, of course, the imagination is working now ... we continue with other images.

After a few minutes, we stop the exercise.

"- This space in front of you is called Chitakas, the space of spiritual action. One can develop this space and the ability to receive and transmit images," repeats Sivamurti.

Yes ... a severe statement ... grandiose ... something like telepathy ... parapsychic powers, etc ... but let's see ... and here, apparently, worked that energy of the mind that is called imagination in Western science.

In other words, we have an exhortation, through the lure of acquiring telepathic power, from the movement's leader to cultivate our imagination. We have already had a taste of one of the methods used. Therefore, they value imagination; it is a spiritual value for them.

The problem, of course, with fantasy is that ... it's not reality. And usually, we humans prefer to live in a reality that is of much greater value.

"Life" in the realm of fantasy is non-existent, fake, ... smoke, ... nothing. The more time we spend as beings moving in the realm of fantasy, the less we live and the more we degrade our lives.

Of course, imagination can be helpful in several cases, but when it becomes a way of being, then it is pure disaster.

Many people, facing difficulties with reality, try to find solace in their imagination. This is how they "escape" from reality and imagine things as they want. This is the process of madness. The other imagines that he is Napoleon the Great ... However, he cannot escape his misery and pain ... At most, he will be locked up in a mental hospital.

Still others resort to drugs. There, they "experience" imaginary situations and "realities." In the end, many of them cannot distinguish their imagination from reality and acquire various obsessive ideas and paranoias... That is, they go crazy. Most walk a tightrope and try to balance between reality and the false fantasy consciousness created by the abuse of drugs. They definitely have problems with the real world and need help.

I bring these few as bad examples of where a person's abuse of his imagination can lead... So that we don't get excited easily and frivolously with the new games that are marketed to us from the East, garnished with exotic wisdom, with various stories of superhuman gurus ... and with oblique huge promises that we will become, soon indeed, like that too ... so that we are a little suspicious of the possible dangers they hide.

Second lesson. It takes place in a large hall of an ashram in India. The teacher is a European female swami (= Hindu monk) who has been a student of the guru for years. He wears the orange rasas.

The students are various visitors to the ashram, from small children to middle-aged people. Yoga-Nidra is advertised as the yoga of relaxation aimed at people living in modern society.

She makes us lie on our backs on the floor, without touching each other, to make ourselves as comfortable as possible.

- Close your eyes and be quiet ... relax.

The instructions come slowly so that we have time to carry them out. Absolute silence prevails in the hall, and only the voice of the Swami can be heard.

- Feel your body becoming heavy ... very heavy ... it is impossible to move it ... feel the points of contact with the floor ... (pause for a few minutes) ... Now feel your body very light ... hovering above the floor ... you are ready to fly ... Now forget your body and see in your mind a beautiful sunset ... now a yellow flower ... a beautiful waterfall ... a bright sun.

The beautiful images follow each other. I see them all very vividly... It's like watching a documentary inside your mind. The teacher's voice is calm and steady, with a regular rhythm. The whole process should take around an hour.

- Now, become aware of your body again...slowly move your limbs.

My body really feels heavy; I can't move quickly.

- Open your eyes slowly and get a feel for the room. I get up slowly. It's like waking up from a deep sleep.

I look around. Most of us look like they have just woken up... But some are still lying on the floor. They fell asleep!! They sleep normally!!

- Wake them up, says the teacher, smiling...

We slowly wake them up, and they look at the ironic smiles of the rest in wonder.

This is a lesson in Yoga-Nidra, as they christened this process. What happened now? ... let's see. First, the swami gave orders, and we carried them out. Maybe this is how we "learn" to obey the swamis as well... Then all this took place inside our minds. We felt and felt, as the swami wanted ... shall we call it submission? ... We put our mind control in her hands, and she took us wherever she wanted. She had complete control over our minds for a period of time... This, of course, was done by our will. We agreed to suffer, to set aside, to disappear our personal will and to accept to be led by her own will. They gain as much power over us as we grant them.

Can you imagine practicing this method daily? ... How much more intense will the above phenomena become? ... Will we end up wanting a swami to guide us in all the activities of our lives? ... Is this, in addition to a relaxation method, also a submission technique?

Overdrawn?. Think it's overkill? ... A particular guru said to his disciples. "Your mind creates problems for you. It is full of contrasts, conflicts, anxiety, doubts, dilemmas and ignorance. Surrender your mind to me, and I will free you from all these" ... This statement may be taken as the magnanimity of the guru, who will carry on his all-powerful and all-wise shoulders the problematic minds of his followers ... but man can be cunning ... to think about this possibility ... to think what will happen, when someone else will think and decide for you, for your life? ... for think of a person who becomes convinced of the Hindu Guru and abrogates himself as a free will, as a free-thinking person, and surrenders his God-given freedom to be managed by himself, in the hands of a Hindu Guru, who may be evil and wicked and want to take advantage of him ... if this is the case, then do we not have an attempt at submission and spiritual slavery?

What else happened in the Yoga-Nidra class? Have you not heard of hypnotism, where a strong-willed person (the hypnotist) imposes his will on a weak-willed person (the hypnotized) and makes him his subject, giving him orders that he carries out without thinking? Of course, all this is done through specific procedures and certain techniques. Doesn't this Yoga-Nidra class sound like a case of group hypnosis? ... Of course, the more often it happens, the more intense and deeper the hypnosis will slowly become.

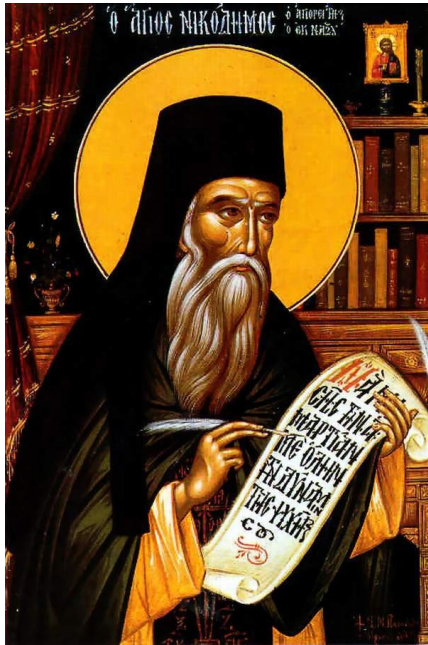
What else happened in this "lesson"? What power, what energy of the mind was working? ... Didn't we constantly imagine various beautiful images for an hour? Had we not closed our eyes, had we not cut ourselves off from our surroundings, had we not lived for an hour or so in our imaginations?

Conclusion.

Imagination is, therefore, the dominant activity. Imagination was cultivated and used at the same time. So yoga-nidra works with the imagination.

I want to underline this to show the great contrast between yoga and orthodox asceticism. Orthodox asceticism rejects fantasy and clings very strongly to reality. It regards the imagination as a dangerous and useless (for spiritual matters, always speaking) area used

par excellence by the devil. The ascetic Fathers call imagination "the bridge of demons," and the devil they call "great director" and fantasist. Through imagination, the devil tries to influence the human mind. They distinguish and expand the energy of imagination clearly and entirely from the real energy of the Grace of Christ and the Holy Spirit. This energy of the Holy Spirit is perceived "quickly," in full consciousness and always outside the realm of imagination... But let us let the patristic texts themselves speak.



The following text, written in the language of his time, is by St. Nicodemus the Athonite from his book "The Invisible War." This book was recommended to me by the elder Paisios. Saint Nicodemus had studied the ancient ascetic texts of the Christian Fathers, and he was the one who composed the great anthologies of these texts with the titles "Philokalia" and "Euergetinos," the readings par excellence of the orthodox monks. Living in the same way the Fathers lived and having the same spiritual experiences, he could understand his subjects experientially and not only abstractly philosophically.

So, summarizing the paternal experience of the Church of Christ, he writes:

“After speaking of control of the outer senses, we should now speak too of how to control imagination and memory; since, in the opinion of most philosophers, imagination and memory are noticing but imprints left by all the sensory objects we have seen, heard, smelt, tasted and touched. It can be said that imagination and memory are one general inner sense that visualizes and remembers everything that the five outer senses happened to experience before. In a certain way, the outer senses and sensory objects resemble a stamp, and imagination is the stamp's imprint.”

Imagination and memory are given to us to use when the outer senses are at rest, and we have not before us the sensory objects, which have passed through our senses and become imprinted in them (in imagination and memory). Since we cannot always have before us the objects we have seen, heard, tasted, smelt and touched, we evoke them to our consciousness using imagination and memory, in which they have been imprinted. In this way, we examine and consider them as though they were concretely before us.

For example, you have once visited Smyrna, then left it, so you no longer see it with your physical eyes. Yet, whenever you wish, you can visualize Smyrna by your inner sense, imagination and memory and see it again as it is, in its actual aspect, dimensions and disposition. It does not mean that your soul leaves you and goes to Smyrna, as some ignoramuses think; it simply means that you see the image of Smyrna that has been imprinted in you.

This visualization of sensory objects greatly bothers and disturbs people, anxious always to remain with God, for it distracts attention from God and carries it off to vain and even to sinful objects, thus disturbing the good order of our inner state. We suffer this not only when awake but also from dreams, the impression of which often lasts for several days.

Since imagination is a force devoid of reason and mainly acts mechanically, obeying the laws of association of images, whereas spiritual life is the image of pure freedom, it stands to reason that its activity is incompatible with this latter life. So I am forced to offer you specific guidance on this subject.

(a) Know that God is beyond all senses and sensory things, beyond all shape, colour, measure and place; is wholly without form and image and, while present in all things, is above all things; therefore, He is beyond all imagining. ‘No imagination can be admitted in relation to God, for He exceeds all mind’ (Callistus and Ignatius ch. 65, quoting from St. Maximus). It follows, therefore, that imagination is a power of the soul such that, by its very nature, it has no capacity for entering the realm of union with God.

(b) Know that Lucifer, first among the angels, was also of old above all foolish imagination and outside all form, colour or sense—an immaterial, unsubstantial, formless and bodiless mind. But he gave rein to his imagination and filled his mind with images of being equal to God, and so fell down from this formless, imageless, passionless and simple immateriality of mind into a multiform, complex and coarse imagination (as many theologians believe), and thus from a formless, immaterial and passionless angel became a devil, in a particular way material, multiform and subject to passion. As he became, so also did his servants—all the demons. St. Gregory of Sinai writes thus about them: ‘At one time they too were minds, but having fallen away from immateriality and refinement, each one of them acquired a certain material coarseness, gaining flesh according to the level and nature of the deeds, whose practice qualified him. For since, just like man, they have lost the delights of angels (the angelic taste or the angelic heaven of delight) and have been deprived of divine bliss, so too, like ourselves, they began to find pleasure on

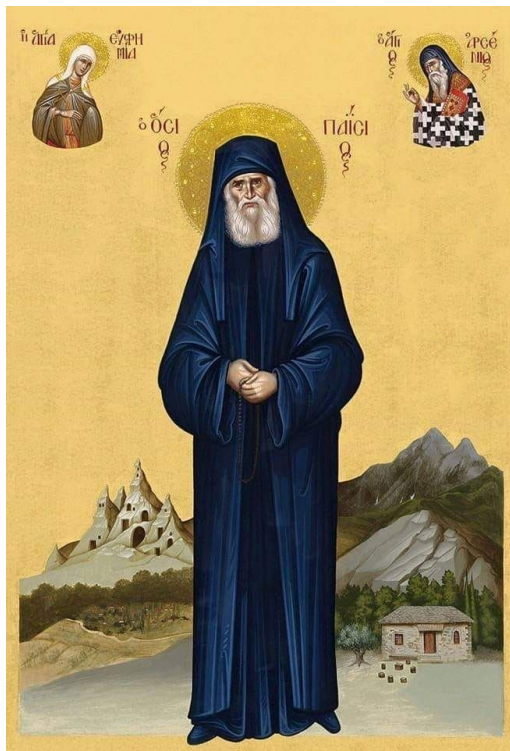
earth, when they became material and acquired the habit of material passions ‘ (ch. 123 Philokalia). For this reason, the holy fathers call the devil a painter, a serpent with many forms, feeding on the dust of passions, a breeder of fantasies, and other such names. The word of God represents him as incarnated into a dragon, with a tail, ribs, neck, nose, eyes, jaws, lips, skin, flesh and other such members. Read of this in chapters xl and xli of the book of Job. Understand from this, beloved, that since multiform fantasy is an invention and creation of the devil, it is very welcome to him and helpful in achieving our ruin. Holy fathers rightly call it a bridge by which the murderous demons enter our soul, become mixed with it and make it a hive of drones, a dwelling place of horrible, evil and impious thoughts and all kinds of impurities both of body and soul.

(c) Know that according to St. Maximus, a great theologian, the first man, Adam, was also created by God without imagination. His mind, pure and free of images, functioned as mind, and so itself acquired no form or image under the influence of the senses or from the images of sensory things. Making no use of this lower power of imagination, he did not visualize the outline, shape, dimensions, or colour of things, but with the higher power of the soul, that is thought, he contemplated purely, immaterially and spiritually only the pure ideas of things or their inner significance. But the devil, the slayer of mankind, having fallen through his dreams of equality with God, instilled in Adam’s mind that he, too, was equal to God, and these fantasies led to Adam’s fall. For this, he was cast down from this immaterial, pure, intelligent and imageless life, akin to the angels, into this sensory complex, multiform life, immersed in images and fantasies—the state of animals devoid of reason. To be immersed in images or live in them and under their influence is the quality of reasonless animals, not beings possessing reason. After man fell into this state, who can tell to what passions, what evil disposition and what errors his imaginative fantasies led him? He filled moral doctrines with various deceptions, physics with many wrong teachings, and theology with unseemly and senseless dogmas and fables. Thinkers not only of old but also, most recently, wishing to speculate and discourse on God and the divine mysteries, which are simple and inaccessible to imagination and fantasy (since it must be the work of the highest part of the soul—the mind) have approached this work without first cleansing their mind from the passionate forms and illusory images of sensory things, and so have found lies instead of truth. And, what is especially grievous is that their soul and heart have embraced these lies, and they cling to them fast as to the truth that expresses reality. Thus, instead of theologians, they become fable-mongers having, according to the Apostle, given themselves over to a reprobate mind (Rom. 1:28). (Read of this in St. Isaac the Syrian at the end of his epistle to St. Simeon, ch. 55.)

So, my brother, if you wish easily and effectively to become free of such errors and passions, if you seek to escape the varied nets and wiles of the devil, if you long to unite with God and obtain divine light and truth, enter courageously into battle with your imagination and fight it with your whole strength, to strip your mind of all forms, colours and shapes, and in general of all images and memories of sensory things, whether good or bad. For all this is an obscuring and tarnishing of the light and purity of your mind, a coarsening of its immaterial state, rendering the mind passionate. Practically no passion, whether of soul or body, can approach the mind except by visualizing corresponding sensory things. So try to preserve your mind colourless, imageless, formless and pure, as God created it.”

So, while Christians avoid imagination "like the devil" during prayer, on the contrary, all gurus and New Agers cultivate it and develop it with the various types of "meditation," they praise it and consider it a "vehicle" and a way to get closer to "god."

Of course, their "god" and Christ are different.



Nowadays, we live in a proliferation of New Age organizations that systematically cultivate the imagination in the minds of their followers. This is how the Devil finds fertile ground to "play movies" with them, as the Elder Paisios used to say.

Thus, the contrast between meditation and Christian prayer shows the significant difference that exists between us. As much as they want to present themselves as similar, close, and superior, there is a "great gulf" between us. As light differs from darkness, God from the Devil, and Christ and His Church differ from the Gurus and their New Age organizations.

You also see the great gulf that exists between Orthodoxy and Hinduism or any kind of Eastern monasticism.

From the book *The Gurus, the Young Man and the Elder Paisios*.